



PattyMurray

United States Senator (D-Washington)



Biography

Patty Murray never planned to enter politics, but today she's serving her second term in the U.S. Senate as a member of the Democratic Leadership. From the classroom to the Congress, Patty Murray has been an effective advocate for Washington's working families. Originally known for her work on education and children's issues, Murray has become a leading figure on transportation, border and port security, healthcare, and economic development.



In the 1980's, when a state politician told her she "couldn't make a difference," Murray led a grassroots coalition of 13,000 parents to save a local preschool program from budget cuts. She went on to serve on the local school board, and in 1988 was elected to the Washington State Senate. In 1992, Murray ran for the United States Senate as a voice for Washington families who were not being heard in the Senate. Dramatically outspent, Murray ran a grassroots campaign of family, friends, supporters, and public interest groups to beat a 10-year veteran of the U.S. House of Representatives and become the first woman to represent Washington state in the U.S. Senate. In 1998, she was re-elected by a wide margin and is currently Washington's senior Senator.

Murray is a unique voice in the United States Senate, where she is known for her down-to-earth, determined style. She's been called "a workhorse, not a show horse" by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer for her intense, behind-the-scenes efforts to get the job done.

Patty Murray has drawn on her experience as a PTA member and a school board president to make education a national priority. She successfully sponsored the bill to help schools hire new, qualified teachers to reduce class size. She has worked to increase Pell grants to make college more affordable and is a national advocate for disadvantaged, homeless, and migrant students.

Senator Murray serves as the highest-ranking Democrat (and former chair) of the Senate Transportation Appropriations subcommittee, which writes the nation's transportation budget. Murray has advocated for increases in highway funding to help alleviate the transportation problems facing Washington state and communities around the country. She convened Senate hearings on port security and cargo security, and authored a pilot project to improve security at the nation's three largest ports, including Seattle and Tacoma.

In 2001 Patty Murray wrote the bill that increased the Coast Guard's budget by 10 percent. Later that year, she stood her ground in the face of a Presidential veto threat to require that Mexican long-haul trucks comply with U.S. safety standards before being allowed to travel throughout this country.

Murray has helped Washington state address its transportation woes by dramatically increasing the annual funding the state receives for specific projects including roads, bridges, railways, airports, and ferries in every corner of the state.

Senator Murray has also made access to health care a top priority. As doctors in Washington state have started closing their practices or refusing to see new Medicare patients, Patty Murray has worked to increase payments to doctors to reverse the trend. She wrote and continues to push for legislation to bring Medicare reimbursement rates for Washington state up to the national average. Murray has supported funding for rural health clinics, and she co-sponsored the Nurse Reinvestment Act, which will help bring more nurses into the profession.

The first woman elected to the Senate from Washington state, Murray has been a champion for women and families. She has spearheaded efforts to close the pay gap, protect women in retirement, and increase access to child care. Murray helped write and pass the historic Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and was a key proponent of its reauthorization in 2002.

Murray has also worked to improve opportunities for Washington's rural communities. She has worked to open new agricultural trade markets overseas, to strengthen the farm safety net and to assist farm workers. She was instrumental in passing the 2002 Farm Bill. Murray has also initiated an effort to bring hi-speed Internet access to rural areas that commercial providers have neglected.

Senator Murray is a strong advocate for protecting our environment. She has increased funding for environmental programs, repeatedly opposed harmful, anti-environmental riders to appropriations bills, and sponsored several pieces of environmental legislation such as the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, which would protect 106,000 acres in Snohomish County, Washington. The area would promote clean water, protect wildlife, and add low-level habitat to Washington's protected lands.

After a terrible gas pipeline explosion in Bellingham, Washington in 1999, Murray developed legislation to improve pipeline safety. Working across party lines, she took on the oil and gas industry and got Congress to pass Pipeline Safety legislation in 2002. Because of Murray's efforts, every oil and gas pipeline in the nation must now be inspected regularly.

Murray is a champion for Washington's 670,000 veterans. She is the daughter of a disabled World War II veteran, and today she is the first woman to serve on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. She brought the Veteran Affairs Secretary to Washington state for hearings on Gulf War Syndrome and has worked to improve health care access for veterans. Murray wrote the law that ensures all veterans can have military funeral honors. She has been honored for her work by the Vietnam Veterans of America, American Ex-POWs, the VFW, the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Murray has been a long-time advocate for increased resources at the Northern Border and worked to provide funding to triple the number of border agents to help keep communities along the Northern Border and across America safe.

She is a leading voice in Congress to protect a woman's right to choose and has sponsored efforts to make emergency contraceptives available in hospitals and to require insurance companies that cover Viagra to also cover contraception.

Born in Bothell, Washington, Murray is one of seven children. Her father won the Purple Heart as one of the first G.I.'s to land on Okinawa. He returned home to run a local five and ten cents shop on Main Street in Bothell. Her mother was a homemaker and accountant. Murray is a graduate of Washington State University. She is married to Rob Murray and has two grown children, Sara and Randy. Randy and his wife Erin have a son, Aidan, the Murray's first grandchild. Patty Murray enjoys fishing, exploring Washington state's great outdoors and spending time with her family.

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Sen. Murray's committee assignments include:

- Appropriations
- Budget
- Health, Education, Labor and Pension
- Veterans Affairs

Within the Appropriations Committee, Murray is the ranking Democrat on the Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, and Housing and Urban Development. She also serves on the following Appropriations subcommittees:

- Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee
- Homeland Security Subcommittee
- Labor, Health & Human Services Subcommittee
- Commerce, Justice, and Science
- Energy & Water Subcommittee

Within the HELP Committee, Murray is the ranking Democrat on the Employment, Safety and Training Subcommittee, and also sits on:

- Education and Early Childhood Development Subcommittee
- Bioterrorism Preparedness and Public Health Subcommittee.